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ABSTRACT

Finnish research in adult education falls into three categories: philosophical, historical, and empirical. (Philosophical research involves the analysis of the concept of adult education and its relationship to other levels of education. Empirical research embraces the psychological and sociological study of students, teachers, institutions, and pedagogic theory.) Until recently, philosophical and historical research predominated. Empirical research has been primarily sociologically oriented and has placed teaching problems in minor position. Other empirical research includes descriptive and participation studies. Since 1975, when adult education was first defined as part of the Finnish educational system, the need to train adult educators has been stressed. A need for research was identified in the following areas: adult education needs in society, obstacles preventing the poor from participating in adult education, the possibilities and means for active recruitment, teaching methods that meet the special needs of the adult learner, and the professional image of adult educators. Comparative studies on the organization and structure of adult education in Nordic countries are also needed. Research in the areas of educational planning, matching the needs of learners with delivery systems, and the potential for computer-assisted instruction is also necessary. (References are appended.) (MN)

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Adult Education Research in Finland

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Our decision to focus on adult education research from a Finnish perspective, instead of from a broad Scandinavian view, was made for the following reasons:

1. Graduate work for the training of adult education researchers enjoys a long tradition in Finland. Since 1925, adult education has been taught at the university level, and since 1946 Finland has had a full-time professor of adult education. Graduate study, which is now located at the University of Tampere, enables students to work toward the following degrees: Master of Social Sciences, Licentiate, and Doctor of Philosophy.

2. This review of research efforts and trends in Finnish adult education is based on the authors' knowledge of Finnish and English resources. In addition, Johnson studied at both the University of Tampere and Turku University as a Bi-centennial Suomi Society scholar, and Niemi participated as a major presenter and resource facilitator at the first national seminar of Finnish training directors and university professors from education, business, psychology and sociology. The theme of this seminar, "Cooperation Between Higher Education and Economy in the Field of Personnel Development," reflected a plea from industry for closer ties with the university. The Foundation for Research in Higher Education and Science Policy which sponsored this seminar has plans to facilitate further dialogue in the area of adult education.

Having established the rationale for our Finnish case study, we believe it is important to provide you with a frame of reference for our discussion of research and current trends and problems. In 1975 the Adult Education Committee defined adult education as:

> . . . organized learning opportunities for adults, who after having completed or discontinued their school education, normally are or have been members of the working community.[1]

This committee also formulated the following aims of adult education policy:

> 1. equalization of educational opportunity by removing social, economic, regional, and intellectual obstacles to learning,
>
> 2. development of professional skills and ability for adults to learn through lifelong education,
>
> 3. provision of increased opportunities for democratic participation in society, and
>
> 4. development of versatile persons through a variety of cultural pursuits.[2]

To help us to grasp quickly a gestalt of the field, Huuhka has provided us with a system. He states that adult education can be divided as follows:

> . . . first into general (liberal) adult education and vocational adult education, even though it is not often possible or even purposeful to aim at making this distinction in practice.[3]

The area of liberal adult education he divided into residential institutes, leisure-time institutes, and organizational adult education. The residential institutes include folk high schools and sports institutes. The category of leisure-time institutes comprised the following: civic and workers institutes, evening secondary schools, and correspondence institutes. Finally, organizational adult education embodies the study circle.

Vocational education, which Huuhka calls training, takes place at vocational institutes. In addition, training occurs in business, industry, and government agencies. The latter also provide training opportunities to the adult learner in society.

Conspicuously absent as a highly developed delivery system is the university, whose extension activities are limited to some lectures and summer session offerings. However, the cultural services sponsored by libraries relate closely to adult education, and radio and television stations offer both formal courses and cultural activities.[4]

In a more recent article, Huuhka points out the inadequacy of vocational education and calls for new organizational arrangements. He does acknowledge the increased training provided by government and industry and plans to organize supplementary education through universities and institutes.[5]

The Institute of Adult Education at Tampere University has taken care of some of the training needs of the field. It has, as a Department of Adult and Youth Education, been responsible for preparing professional adult educators for the degrees of Master of Social Sciences, Licentiate, and Doctor of Philosophy. As for research, Tuomisto states:

> The themes of the research projects made by the personnel of the Institute and students have centered quite one-sidedly around the organizations of [liberal] adult education and their activity. We must state that the research work done in the Institute has been planned and coordinated rather badly and it has been limited almost wholly to necessary examinations.[6]

Research: The Finnish Perspective

When we review adult education research from the Finnish perspective, it beomes clear that the research to date falls into Alanen's categories of (1) philosophical, (2) historical, and (3) empirical. Alanen defines these categories as follows:

> By philosophy of adult education is meant a scientific approach seeking to analyze the concept of adult education, to examine its relationship to the education of children and youth, and to clarify problems concerning the ultimate aims of adult education. Empirical research embraces the

> psychological and sociological study of students, teachers and institutions and of their activities, and, in addition, the empirical development of paedagogic theory.[7]

In regard to adult education research in the Nordic countries, Nilsen reports that Finland is the only country where work has been done concerning a philosophy of adult education.[8] This early focus on philosophy has had both positive and negative results in the development of Finnish adult education research. On the positive side, Castren, as early as the 1920's, set himself the task of creating a general theory of adult education, based on English adult education theory.

In his work on adult education theory, Harva took the view that education includes adult education as an organic element. Other research relates to the roles of workers in civic institutes.[9] The continued recognition of the importance of further research into a philosophy of adult education is expressed by Lehtonen:

> The definition . . . of adult education is a question of demanding and extensive research which would require . . . extensive handling of the theoretical concepts. . . . From the point of view of the development of adult education as a particular social science, this kind of research would be of primary importance, and it awaits the research [er] who will carry it out.[10]

On the negative side, the first professor of adult education took the position that philosophical research was manageable only by an individual and that empirical research was not. This arbitrary view has prevented the Adult Education Institute at Tampere University from providing leadership in meeting research needs in the field. In his own recent book, SUOMEN AIKUISKASVATUS (Finnish Adult Education) this limited perspective is revealed. The translated text reads in part as follows:

> Theoretical interpretations . . . of the goals of adult education are nearly always one individual's responsibility, and interpretative assistance frequently exists in the

> literature. Empirical studies are generally such large tasks that no one individual has the capacity to undertake them.[11]

Historical research on adult education in Finland has occurred in both Finland and the United States. Huuhka has published an excellent study of 100 years of Finnish adult education. He selected the year 1874 as the historical starting point in Finnish adult education, with the founding of Kansanvalistusseura, the Society for Popular Culture. Although he recognized that the education of adults existed earlier, the formation of sequential activities can be traced only since the development of the society. He divides this history into three periods: (1) the phase of organizing, 1874-1920 (a period that includes the independence of the coun-ry); (2) the phase of becoming settled, 1920-1939; and (3) the phase of extending. This historical report of free cultural activities (adult education) is the beginning point of an important social history.[12]

Two doctoral disserations have been completed at Indiana University on the history of the Finnish Folk School. Larson's study is a comparative one which records the development of the folk school in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United States.[13] The material on the Finnish Folk School forms a chronology, not a social history. A limitation of the Finnish section was that the author did not use primary sources but based his Finnish perceptions strictly on contemporary literature. Leskinen, in his historical research, did use primary sources and discussed factors and forces that affected development of the residential folk school.[14]

According to Huuhka, empirical research "has mainly been sociologically oriented empirical research where didactic problems [teaching] have been in minor position."[15] Under this empirical rubric, one finds descriptive studies

focusing on students, like Oksanen's study of folk high school students.[16] Perhaps the most useful work has been the participation studies of Lehtonen and Tuomisto. The research findings, based on a national sample, centered on who participates,[17] study disposition, expectations of adult populations,[18] conceptions of adult education and participation,[19] and the level of activation (participation scales).[20] This research generated an activation model [21] and studied its applicability to the planning of adult education systems.[22]

The participation studies had shown that the least educated adults were not being reached through adult education. Kekkonen describes a successful experiment using Freire's pedagogy with prisoners [23] and other groups who were not participating actively in adult education i.e., pensioners in rural areas. North Finnish guest workers, unqualified laboratory workers, and housewives.[24]

The earlier comment on the lack of didactic (teaching) research reflects the author's ability to locate only one study on methods. It focused on combining correspondence and oral methods in teaching secondary school subjects to adults.[25]

Policy-Making Studies

The 1975 Adult Education Committee's Report defined adult education, for the first time, as a part of the society's educational system. This fitting of adult education into the whole system of the lifelong education resulted in a five-part pattern: pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher and adult education. With respect to the functions of adult education, the study set certain priorities and contained the committee's proposal that responsibility for the provision of adult education belongs to the Ministry of Education. In order to meet the many aims proposed in this study, the need for training adult educators was stressed.

As for research, basic research and theory-building were stressed. The committee emphasized particular areas of needed research in the field as follows:

1. to ascertain adult education needs in society;
2. to study the obstacles that prevent those with the poorest initial education and lowest participation rate from participating in adult education;
3. to expound the possibilities and means of active recruitment;
4. to pursue didactic research into the special requirements of adult study, with special emphasis on the overcoming of learning difficulties; and
5. to conduct research into the professional image of adult educators.[26]

The decision to start reforming the adult education system has begun. In 1978, the Finnish government established principles that will provide a strong foundation for lifelong education in the compulsory school system. They will give to adults opportunities to renew knowledge, skills, and abilities for fuller participation as workers and citizens in society. Vocational training will be expanded, and more flexible opportunities will be provided for adults to meet requirements of comprehensive school and secondary school. In 1980 a new law will become in effect, guaranteeing workers the right to take study leave for periods of time without losing job benefits. At this time, there is no remuneration available for study leave.[27]

Another important area of policy-making studies is peace research, which has expanded the narrow concept of peace as the absence of war to a concept of peace as the absence of direct and structural violence.[28] This research has implications not only for the content of adult education programs, but for the effects of those programs on society as a whole.

Trends and Issues

Adult educators in Finland continue to have close relations with their counterparts in other countries. This situation has been especially true of educational institutions representing the world of work, where close collaboration has taken place. On the formal level, Nordic cooperation has been established through the Nordic Cultural Commission. This Commission appointed a special committee, known as the Nordic expert committee on research, within adult education. The committee made the following recommendations:

1. Each Nordic country will require centers for adult education research, documentation and teaching.
2. Comparative research studies are needed on analyses of the organization and structure of adult education in Nordic countries.
3. Studies are needed on participation, teaching, etc. within similar forms of adult education institutions.[29]

Another example of regional cooperation was a workshop organized by the Council of Europe for participants from Norway, Finland, and Sweden to analyze the application of educational technology.[30]

On the international scene, Finnish adult educators have worked closely with other countries through the efforts of the Finnish Association of Adult Education Organizations, a cooperative body of 12 organizations. The Association was created to develop policy for adult education and to provide linkages with adult educators throughout the world. Here, Finland is viewed as a possible bridge between countries of Eastern and Western Europe. Through an annual meeting in Finland, opportunities for international exchange have occurred. Initially the meetings were held in cooperation with the European Bureau of Adult Education; these were expanded in the 1970's to include adult educators from developing

countries. The 1979 meeting in Finland was scheduled to follow the General Meeting of the International Council for Adult Education, to enable adult educators from 28 countries to participate. The theme of Adult Education for the Future was approached through three sub-themes: Prospects for the Future, The New International Economic Order in Adult Education, and Peace Research as the Basis or Peace Education.

As for adult education research, Susiharju of Helsinki University dealt with futures research and emphasized the importance of adopting a critical attitude toward scenarios and models by examining the values inherent in their creation. Swantz, from the University of Helsinki, examined the implications of participatory research. This research methodology was described against the background of her work in Tanzania.[31]

As for the future development of adult education, Kivisto, Minister of Education, states:

> . . . education is being brought as a whole into the sphere of national planning for the first time, and, in my opinion, it was high time to tie adult education into other social planning. Prior to this, adult education had been allowed to sprout and grow completely without overall planning and national guidance, while at the same time the rest of the school system was being brought into ever tighter connection with the social reality surrounding it. The field of adult education that grew out of this sort of over-emphasized freedom and private ideas naturally was marked by a lot of deficiencies and distortions, but it must be admitted that many parts of the field exhibit undeniable merits.[32]

One issue that seems to be paramount relates to control. Royce earlier voiced this concern over the study circle, questioning the use of government funding for the spreading of one's own aims and idealogies. Are these experiences in widening horizons of thought he asked? But if this education of a voluntary nature were not encouraged, wouldn't there be a loss of initiative, flexibility, and variety in adult education programming?[33]

While control of adult education looms as an issue, the goals being proposed for the folk school might present another issue. In a country which is becoming increasingly urban, the suggestion that youth be given practical training in elements not found in industrialized cities[34] may be totally unrealistic. Will young adults be interested in the practical experience of rural life?

The problem of matching the needs of learners with delivery systems continues to be a major concern of Finnish adult educators. For Finnish training directors, distance education is a high priority. Niemi explored the potential of compter-assisted instruction for management training. Using PLATO as a model, he discussed the potential of such instruction, along with the implications of developing such a system in Finland.[35]

The need to do research to meet these concerns has been recognized by the Finns. In a recent government announcement, this need was articulated thus:

> The development of adult education will be based upon a continuing program of research and experimentation. Scientific resources will be increasingly directed toward the areas of adult education, and the basic knowledge in the field will be gathered and analyzed in a way that will benefit the overall planning of education.[36]

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